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Port Authority Eliminates the Position of Its Police Chief

By CHRISTINE HAUSER

The Port Authority's police chief lost his job on Wednesday when his position was eliminated.

A memorandum from the executive director of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, Christopher O. Ward, said that the position of chief of police, held since January 2004 by Christopher Trucillo, had been eliminated to streamline "command and control" and to make one person accountable: the superintendent of the police force, Samuel J. Plumeri Jr. The superintendent's position is a civilian one, while the chief's was a uniformed, sworn job.

"The elimination of this position has no impact on the Port Authority's ability to safely and securely police its facilities," said Pasquale DiFulco, a spokesman for the authority. The decision is effective immediately, he said. When asked whether the chief had been removed from the authority altogether, he declined to comment.

Chief Trucillo, a 22-year veteran of the authority's Police Department, could not immediately be reached for comment.

The vice president for the Port Authority's police union, Paul Nunziato, said the decision to eliminate the chief's post came after the superintendent and other authority officials cut the number of patrol posts — including some at the Lincoln Tunnel and other crossings — last month. They cut back about 40 percent of the positions, he said.

"The chief was telling his command to follow the order, but if it affects your ability to combat terrorism and affects public safety, to document it," Mr. Nunziato said. "He followed his orders, but he told his people to document what they were being ordered to do."

"I am amazed that they would fire the chief," Mr. Nunziato said. "This guy was the chief in charge of internal affairs and civilian complaints, and he was a 'by the book' professional."

Mr. DiFulco would not comment on cuts in patrols, but said that the authority's Police Department was "able to aggressively and appropriately police its facilities."

The move came less than a week after the release of a revamped development plan for the World Trade Center site. The plan laid out a detailed schedule, calling for billions of dollars in reconstruction projects at the site, to be completed between 2012 and 2014. The Port Authority assumed responsibility for the project about four years ago.

"Now that we are moving into the next phase of P.A.P.D. operations, especially as it relates to the World

Trade Center area, we will need to build a more appropriate structure reflective of these changing times,” Mr. Ward said in the memorandum.

Chief Trucillo was appointed to the department in 1986. He had many assignments, including command of the authority’s Internal Affairs Unit, where he was in charge on Sept. 11, 2001.

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